



A U B A D E

The Mary Washington College
Review of Arts and Literature

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“till human voices wake us,”
Travis Head

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Elegy for My Verse

by Cynthia Lotze

How long has it been since the time
when I knew how to do this?
When the tip of my tongue
and the tip of my pen
laughed and lashed like sisters?
How long has it been since the poem
that had to come came and camped:
sang up to my window,
ambushed me in halls,
sat on my pillow, carved in my walls
'til my fingers itched.
And then I painted with ink and spit
and fingernail polish and my brother's pastels,
and anything a hungry hand could grasp.
Until love came and settled.
Allowed for me only orange for passion
and silver for everything else.
When love left it packed fire
in a suitcase and slammed the door,
saying no words and leaving none behind,
leaving me to sit and think
upon the distance between
my whirling brain and a too-clean sheet of paper.

[my foremother--

Rosemary]

my foremother—Rosemary
she sat among the ashtrays
and dribbled flakes of charco

from her limp Montecarlos—
wrists hung over the arms of her sagging green wingback
the bony wrists, on withered arms,
and her rings could no longer fit
over the great balls of her arthritic knuckles.

Rosemary—my father's beloved
the ma'am that tugged him from
kindergarten
to military school—
or shoved him with the ornery motion
of a drunk—

my grandmother
she is not dead
but I speak of her in the past tense
for she has proved herself to be gone

I am cruel
she sits among the ashtrays
and pages through her tabloids, half blind under forty watt
light bulbs

she lives
 in the house her husband bought
 where she raised daddy, and the
aunts, Kathy and Chris
and the Oriental runners
are black from unwashing and tobacco air
 and are layered so thick
my child sister could never run
 without tripping up
 and falling down.

Rosemary sits
in her collapsing green
 nightmare—
but I suppose it's my nightmare
and she is now resting
and when we come in—she has a smile of long black-
yellow teeth
and mutters as she straightens her wig—
 and reaches for her cane—
she sat among the ashtrays
and pulled my eighteen year old brother
 onto her knee
and ran her monster hands
 through the lanks of his hair
rubbing his scalp with the ends of her nails
lulling him away—still she had a touch of medicine—
she blew kisses at me, where I sat squirming on the stiff
couch
and she flicked her red lighter—spark spark—
and offered my brother
a smoke.

My Grandfather Smelt Like Rain Today

by Gwendolyn Nixon

My grandfather smelt like rain today,
of melted American in grilled cheese sandwiches
ruffled potato chips stuffed in its slits
a gooey crispy bite of gooey crispy Grandfather

My grandfather smelt like rain today,
of green Jell-O shot out of sister's nose
slices of jellied fruit from tin cans
arranged carefully in lime liquid by concentrated
Grandfather

My grandfather smelt like rain today,
of worn hands plucking a worn ukelele,
singing his I don't knows about
a girl named Susannah, who'd probably
grown up and gotten old like sweet-voiced Grandfather

My grandfather smelt like rain today,
of torn knees wiped methodically
stung by medicine spray with no tears
shiny Bugs Bunny Band-Aids
applied with a firm touch of no-nonsense Grandfather

My grandfather smelt like rain today
of Strawberry Shortcake bicycles
driven precariously over unbalanced gravel
banana seat firm between spandexed thighs
held up by the strong hands of sturdy skinny Grandfather

My grandfather smelt like rain today
of potent OFF sprayed generously by screen doors
thin arms covered pumped to church to hear
children's choir voices joyfully praising Jesus
I adore thee proudly claps bug-sprayed Grandfather
My grandfather smelt like rain today
of dried pumpkin play-dough placed on tongues
tiny candy treat relished in tiny mouths
Donald Duck coin purse hid in metal lunchbox
Pandora's gift to the *nietos* of wide-grinned Grandfather
My grandfather smelt like rain today,
of sopping wet suits hung over chlorine towels
stretched bones sip colored iced water
fireflies flash bulb of camera snap-shots
hammocks older than loose-skinned Grandfather
My grandfather smelt like rain today,
of bumblebee bungalows in sunken folds
surprise wasp meals taken behind scabbed knees
swollen pedal of the one-legged wonder
ice remedy controlled by Colonel Grandfather, reporting



Cynthia Lotze



Cynthia Lotze

Louis Friedman

by Gabriel Goldstein

At the funeral reception, on the twenty-third floor,
I see neckties and black blouses; politely withheld
Emotions. Below couch-level,
Children are pretending to be wild animals,
Ducking introductions, tired of cheese and crackers,
Sour cream fish and stiff grown-up talk

With heavy hands on our shoulders. Sunlight drapes
Over dry carpets, browning photographs. No explanations
For cousins who'd been old a long time,
That once were playing at funeral receptions, and
Now are disappeared, hands unfeeling,
Immobile. Smalltalk for the sake

Of survival, a losing proposition, a but better
Than telling the children they haven't
The faintest idea where Cousin Louis has
Gone. We'll understand when we're older,
They imply. We duck past the forced flowers
And plates of bagels, the panty hose and prissy dogs that
scowl.

In Central Park, we clamber up on rocks
For air; children in yarmulkes play
Football and jump rope, chasing pigtails, singing
Songs I remember from somewhere,
Yellow leaves flutter down to earth.

Perhaps they think it would all fall apart
If they told us they don't know
Much of anything, being old. But maybe
Then, they could sit on the floor again,
Below the squirming sincerity, and play.



Mary W. Clark

m i d n i g h t, down back

by Chad Denton

ghost arms caress
your naked neck

electric light,
chlorine, the sweet

taste of night air.
down in the face

of the azure water,
your eye catches

electrons and galaxies
dancing and colliding.

your thoughts,
rendered cruel

and godlike;
the cosmos

turns inwards
and love

love is there
it stings the eyes

it drowns your
throat, unable

to speak;
and you can't

taste it, and you
can't touch it

Kevin

by Gwendolyn Nixon

I love it when you fall asleep at night
hardly knowing that I am still there
besides the occasional throw of your heavy arm
slung over my shoulder, an involuntary twitch
I love to brush my fingers along
your smooth bicep wondering how God sculpted you so
perfectly

Was there a day of rest after you were complete?

I love when I feel the cold air from the room
slip under the thin cover from the right
burning warmth of your body to the left
I lie rigidly
not wanting to disturb the angelic slumber of a man

THE CAT'S DESPAIR

by Lisa Shroyer

There are times when the night air is too harsh to blow, and it hangs on its own stillness, stirring only to remind the hairs along my neck that it is winter. It was a night like this when I walked from the Bell Tower to the capitol; down along the sleazy shoulder of Hillsborough street, passing the college bars and the dark windowed book shops. Passing guys in leather jackets who leaned against light poles, smoking those North Carolina smokes with the heritage of the weed dripping from their lips.

It's a good walk to the capitol—not good as in worth or appreciation on my part, but good as in vast distance, from one light to the next, from the bus stop by Pullen to the nightclubs along Morgan. And the cars come fast, too fast for downtown driving, with the bass hip hop slipping from cracked windows where laughing dark faces can briefly, in a flash, be seen looking at you. I shouldered them off, straightening the fat lapel of my pea coat, smoothing down my hair down into the back of the collar to warm my neck, to quiet the hostile goosebumps rising in their revolutions.

We were supposed to meet—it was the plan—to meet under the Bell Tower at ten o' clock, there with the red spotlights shining up onto the obelisk shape of the structure, up to the grim four faced clock where pigeons landed, then lifted from again. It was the plan. She didn't show.

I walked down to the capitol because it was the most logical maneuver. When Sylvia hadn't showed by 10:42, I left my perch on the Tower platform, jumping down onto the soft wet earth, shoving hands in woolen pockets and moving along. Two cops had driven by and several college girls, hanging out the passenger windows of their vehicles had yelled at me. I was tired of waiting, motionless and stiff in the cold. Sylvia wasn't coming for me.

Sylvia was the girl with an oversized grin and an empty pack of cigarettes that she saved, squashed in the front pocket of her crocheted purse. She wore lip-gloss and pronounced her S's with a snaky hiss—she touched people when she talked to them. She wore her hair in airy layers and pushed it back with thin hands, tipped with glossy nails—I'd know she had little value, but her teeth were square and white; her face dimpled when she smiled.

I planed myself on a bench in front of the capitol, facing its stolid squareness and its rigid unsmilingness. It was cement, no beauty or grace of architecture, no sensitivity in its blocks or archways. It was lit with spotlights, but the streetlights made angled shadows touch and caress it, falling into its recesses and alcoves like the languid hips of a downtown woman. It was ugliness architectified. . .

In the daytime there are pigeons, multitudes of fat gray and green pigeons, strutting and fluttering and pecking, here on the paved lawn of the capitol. They flock around the benches, where unlucky resters are battered for cracker bits. But then, as I sat there admiring the ugly columns, at fifty minutes till midnight, there were no pigeons. It wasn't the capitol without pigeons; it wasn't government without bird defecation.



Cynthia Lotze

I sat alone with the ugly building, hearing the whirl of traffic flow along behind me.

I sat fingering the hem of my coat, rolling the cylindrical buttons between my chilled fingers—it was one of those moments—with my view falling inwards, into my chest and concentrating on the navy wool. There was a single white hair on the dark fabric, like a cat hair. I concentrated on the hair, straight and slender, tapering to nothing—the white hair—

The plan was to meet at 10:00, on the platform under the Tower. She had said, “Make sure you’re there on time. Or else—“

The wind moved quickly, moved in on me, seated on the bench, thin spurts of frigid wind. I shivered, lost my concentration on the hair. I looked up to see a figure walking under the streetlight, ambling, dark, yelling. A car turned the corner, came close to the figure. He called out, cussing, “Hey! Get a Harley! *Man!*”

She had said, “Make sure you’re there on time. Or else I won’t call you anymore—“ and she hung up, the dial tone throbbing, droning in my head.

She didn’t show and now I was alone in the dark pulsing heart of town. The whole town pulsed from this center, pulsed with the purple-black blood moving sluggishly through its arteries, into the bars and hotels, the capillaries. The poison blood—

She’d given me rides in her car a few times and I was disturbed by the way she drove, with one hand out the window, letting her whole limb follow an undulating rhythm. She played the radio too loud through her tinny speakers and smacked her chewing gum. She yelled at other drivers and tapped her nails on the steering wheel. She was a southern girl and she drove with jerky stops and a hand on the horn—she had a cross hanging in the rear-view mirror. . .

I was alone. I had been stood up at the Tower, but I walked to the capitol because it was the end, where the face of order rose, with its stalwart gray panels and the sheet-like windows, to challenge me “Halt!” Here it was cold and the

wind crept in through the statues and trees, its face split upon the tall structure of the Civil War monument. . . “for our Confederate dead”. It’s different to be alone at the capitol, different from waiting for someone at the Tower, where I knew what was coming; Sylvia was coming for me at the Tower. At the capitol there was only the newspaper blowing towards me, skidding on its opened pages, hitting a crack in the pavement, flitting over the grass, rustling gently.

No one was coming for me here.

I sat for some time, listening to the ranting of the drunk as he passed from corner to corner and then passed into the deep city. I could count three stars overhead, only three and they were meek and wear of a million years shining, and they were dying. I tried not to look up at them, concentrated instead on the steady onslaught of the newspaper—now it came apart and was two papers, shuffling outwards in their own directions.

It was the hypnotic hiss of the paper moving on the concrete and the numbing of my skin that pushed me into sleep. I dozed more than slept and the only sensation I was aware of was the gentle brush of my uncut hair across my face. But I slept and the world in my eyes was brown and soft and warm. . .

There was a cry—The cat ran startled across the square, and her cry was sudden and shocked me awake. She stood in the broken spot of light cast by a street lamp, small and dark and ugly, her head low to the ground, blank white eyes watching. She cried again and when she did I could faintly see the pink of her open mouth. I shivered. Then the mouth opened and I knew the scream was coming again—“No!” I hissed, pouncing forward—trying to stop that sound. When the scream came again I fell back, cold, and she dodged into the shadow, into the dark.

I could feel the cat’s energy had gone through my flesh, that cry was in me! Echoing and spinning. I could feel the rush of energy go through me, beyond me, into the night, through the walls of the buildings behind me, through to the next, into a restaurant where the diners raised their heads,

feeling the ice suddenly harden their senses.

I was alone.

I sat long after the cat had gone and I could only sit, blinking in the dark. I could only feel the isolation of this spot and wonder at how clear it was, how quickly the elements of loneliness had been summed into that cat's scream and launched into my being. Words forming in the perimeter of my mind, the graspless thoughts expired to nothing, then born again—

If each cat everywhere could generate such a motion of particles that it must diffuse itself through all forms of matter and space—then what happens when a tiger in India lumbers to its great paws from its resting spot in the shade and, sighting a gray gazelle in the tall grass, slowly starts to move, the to sprint, then to run with great limbs moving and the loose flesh over the sides and the shoulders rolling, rolling with its gait—does that energy spread outwards to the cosmos? Do the Pleiades shuffle about to avoid the sweeping arm of light? And when two cats are walking along separate streets in the city, and happen to be walking toward the same point, what of the crossing of their energies? Does it ricochet off a wall, into a man in the bagel shop mopping the linoleum, into his brain matter, deeper, into his heart, does he cry out for the ending of the energy is in him and the pain of it is great, the pain of loneliness and isolation like the sight of me on the bench in the dark in this southern stronghold, alone—the pain of two cats' waves of particles raging, then simultaneously dying within him?

Is this the birth of despair?

Despair like wind on the bridge where a woman looks over, contemplating—

And what was I contemplating there in the dark? To go home or wait for some new event? A revelation? A divine vision? It occurred to me that never in any other phase of my life would I sit there like that, without reason, sitting in the dark alone because a girl I detested stood me up...

Why did the cat's howl bring on this horrible

solitude?

Was this Eve's revelation as she turned her head to see the angel turning his great flaming sword, left right, north south—was this the breaking of her heart, the breaking and dying, then renewing again, only to break again...

It is the despair of humanity, this loneliness in the dark heart of a poisoned city where the Tower bells are tolling now and nothing is more ancient than that sound—where the mourning doves rise with heavy breasts from the escarpment. The Tower where Sylvia never showed—

All the history lessons came back to me then, passages in a blue text book—**The young queen was executed at the Tower with only her waiting women as witnesses—The women at the Tower, dressed in capes and embroidered veils, walking single file as they tread the path of the doomed to death. The platform, the scaffold, the chopping block for her—the black ravens cawing in the dawn as she looks to the blank heavens... with the horrible rising in her throat she lives this fate and goes down, a woman in shackles to the earth, weeping, weeping...**

And the Tower is red on Hillsborough Street where I waited for illusions, but the cat found me and called out my name—Human!—and woke me to this seeing, I am alone, I am alone.

I don't know why but a rock was solidifying in my throat, under the Adam's apple, and I wanted to weep—

Let me not follow Eve into that dusty Judean desert, where the knowledge of mortality is a bell ringing out my joy's finality—where all the peoples have descended to the cat's despair... I am alone.

The bench was hard and cold and wet as the rain came down, slowly, then harder, then fierce and icy with rain's contempt. I could have walked back to the Tower; there was the possibility of Sylvia showing still. There was the chance her face could dispel this sudden agony—I **am riding on the agony like comets racing to the earth**—but how can her face exist now? She can't be real now, the plastic of her flesh would melt in the cat's gaze.

I sat on the bench before the capitol, under the monument “for our Confederate dead”—and I endured the racing energy in me, rising. It is horrible to know the messenger’s message—the newspaper is now sodden, it does not move, it does not rustle, it lies plastered to the pavement. No one is coming for me here; the cat is gone and all the centuries of man’s cries are marching through the sludge of my brain... I am alone but for them. **I am following Eve into the tragedy of humanity, stepping into the dust... as this wave dies in me I know sorrow is coming—and I know how the gazelle feels as she goes down, torn and blooded, to the earth, weeping, weeping...**

I walked back to the apartment complex by way of another street, avoiding the pools that formed in the gutters and potholes. I walked quickly through the slow rain, past open windows where music and voices spilled out into the thin air. As I fumbled with the latch on the chain link fence that rimmed the complex’s parking lot, I heard laughter off to the left. I looked up quickly, bothered by the sound.

Across the alley, standing on a corner of grass outside another residential building, a black man was embracing his black lover. Her face was raised to his, her hand holding a plastic bag above her hair to protect it from the rain. His hands were on her waist and he was kissing her neck, her chin raised, she was laughing. The thick rain was wet on her clothing, streaming on their dark skin, but they weren’t cold, they weren’t cold. It was ugly and it was beautiful to see—I managed the latch and hurried through the lot to the steps.

I could still hear the girl laughing, now squealing, as I turned the key in the lock of my door. The sound only compacted my loneliness—I threw off my coat, the woold heavy with rain, and when it missed the chair, I let it stay on the floor. I sat on the edge of the bed and rested my head in my hands. Lights from outside came white through the Venetian blinds and made stripes across the little room. I could hear police sirens. I looked over at the alarm clock to check the time and noticed a notepad propped on the

telephone—

*Sylvia called—said she can't make it tonight.
Meet her tomorrow night, same time at the Bell Tower—
she's sorry. MIKE. P.S.—I borrowed five bucks, thanks.*

I looked at the note for a few minutes. I put my hand through my wet hair, through the greasy lanks of it and realized how long it had grown, unchecked. That was all I could think of as I sat in my soaked clothes in the dark, in a little room one block away from the Tower, a good walk from the capitol where the cat hunted souls and the metropolitan blood pulsed outwards, grasping the drunks and the diners and the lovers alike in its purple hand, pulsed upwards into the college district, out to the fairgrounds, past the suburbs, pulsed thinly and weakly into the tobacco fields where cats hunted grasshoppers and farmers raised their weathered faces to the rain and sighed, "Ahh, the Lord is good.", and beyond that the pulse dies and the fist of humanity falls open, powerless, and all the oppressed of the ages scramble free and run across the barren plains, nude and running with gazelle, with Eve who breathes again and reaches out her hands to me... **I am weeping now...**

Content

by Sarah E. Colona

I remember leaning against the wall
deep in thought (as always)
listening to his piano murmur
as shadows danced
in dark corners
breathing
in shivering gasps
of reverie
I could smell his cologne
among the competing
fragrances
(their hazelnut coffee and
my jasmine tea)
it was warm and wonderful
like a whispered promise
of trust and security
exactly what I needed
at the moment

Persephone Speaks

by Meg Weireter

I wish my words came thick and fast, like swarms of bees, from out of my chest. He took that too—I don't talk freely now. The poets speak for me. These words are in my head. Cold clouds of Hades freeze the ghostly mouths tight shut, and tormented hums are all you can hear, buzzing.

He swoops to me, makes sure that I'm still here, his prize, his wife, his stolen queen. But where else would I be now that I'm his? There's nowhere I can go. Now it's just him in his ample mass, lying next to me night after night, his cold breaths on my mouth. He clutches me tight to him, and I think of the first time he grabbed me, and brought me here. That night my body convulsed and shook. But no demon cat from inside—he stood before me, instead, and held me, and made me swallow his loathsome seed. I couldn't get away.

Now, sitting silently under the world,
imprisoned as I've always been, I hear
the melting mouths, I feel the subtle heat
of women who got away. These women sit
in circles, advocacy groups, and cry
and wail their sorrows, on and on, each word
their own to speak. I don't think they remember
me, the first victim of the first crime,
the rape that never ends. But I know them,
and knowing them consumes me. The little part
of me that isn't dead yet listens well,
and when they swallow death, as they must soon,
with their mouths opened wide and loud, I hope
they take me with it, down their swelling throats
where the hot healing words are coming from.

Kitchen, Early Morning

by Meg Weireter

My mother dreamed in weddings, flowers, pink,
in walks on beaches, nuzzles, starry night.
When a husband danced toward her, all was right—
she smiled, sweating, from the kitchen sink
and kept on dreaming. Never did she think
that, as the kids grew fat and money tight,
her dancing spouse would sneak off in the night,
trade whispers, kisses, fondles, numbers. Drink.

Now coffee steam snakes up its trellis, up,
and slithers over newsprint's disarray.
My mother's bathrobed form sinks back, corrupt,
her brown eyes wide, but filming with decay.

This time she knows he's gone. The empty cup
will gleam alone, white, blinding. It is day.



Painting

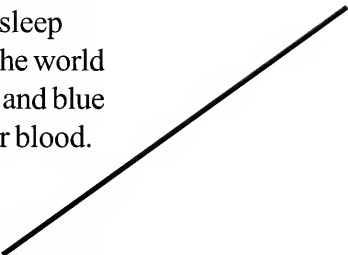
by Cynthia Lotze

Who is the woman
with the frantic hands
and the still, play-actress eyes?
Her lips curl and fall.
She nods, and runs,
and fumes, and sleeps,
and sleeps.

And her hands are always
frantic because her blood
races out to the tips
of her fingers.

Electric and green,
purple and burning
to pulse out past her skin.
Hunger to ink out the sky
line with blood full enough
to fill a million pages,
a thousand skies,
a hundred women
with lips that curl and fall.

Who sleep and sleep
and burn to fill the world
with the orange and blue
and gold of their blood.



Deeper

by Crystal J. Santerre

I can't remember the last rain
To water the parched ground and send
Music torrent along the gutters
With the steady rhythm and tenor tone.

The dust here gathers in sand piles
Along the sidewalk and deep in the road
Trenches, kicked up by cars and black
In the bath drain from my toes.

Still the grass tonight glows the special
Green of spring and seems alive
To the purple dusk because it reaches
For the sky from an unseen well, it grows.

And I remember in the dry days the way
It feels to rely on a deep and ancient well
Of forgiveness, to forget my faults
In weakness and drink of the love I know.

Then I find in the morning a freshly watered
Earth with weeping leaves and sand a darker
Brown, as nature's newly dressed colors contrast
And assure—He never lets us thirst for long.

Election Night in Intensive Care

by Sarah Lucas

Every second the nation holds its breath
While you struggle for just one. Each
Heartbeat is a tiny drop of hope spilling into
My shattered cup. The nurse walks in and
Looks you over. Then she changes
The channel. "I'm glad he's winning"
Is all she says to me. It is absurd

That anything else should matter now. This tear
Stained reality before me is not filtered
Through that gray and fuzzy screen
Of constructed emotion. I cover my ears
But the background noise stings
My painful thoughts. If I had just one
Wish it would be for you

Who no one elected to put here.
It's a quarter past midnight
And we have a winner. The disembodied
Cheers drown out the steady beeping
That slows into a screaming line. You would
Have thought he is a good choice. I only
Wish I had a choice

For you. Next year
I won't be able to keep myself from
Remembering, my mind forever
Tainted with this strange
Association. Tonight, we counted
Our gains and our losses. But for me
One loss was too many.

CONFRONTATION

by Jen Lucas

I looked at him and he threw my glance back at me,
On a blindingly bright, cold, blustery day in January.
My hair swirled around in long ringlets towards his freckled
face,
The wind was like a swarming sadness—

We stood there motionless for eons.
And then, his brilliant blue eyes frowned at me,
And a nervous breath sank into my chest.
I was trapped between embracing him or breaking down in
tears,
But instead I just turned and walked away.



Cynthia Lotze

Old Fan

by Gwendolyn Nixon

sweat beads on my upper lip
arms raise, lift the hair off the back of my wet neck
crickets chirp and sing outside in the sweltering heat
pleasant enough until you try to ignore them

arms lift Grandfather's aged fan to the cracked window sill
I press my face against its crisscrossed face
suck in the warm breeze
switch off the lamp, please cool damp room, old fan

dim light turns back on as I rise from the bed,
lone sheet shoved to the floor
I stare at the wet brow, the sweaty cheeks before me in the mirror
Tired eyes, some youth, no beauty, unimpressed at what's before them.

I see the lamp reflected on my pupils
fan blowing my hair
crickets chirping in the lawn
and something else unable to be labeled.

[The esteem of his alcohol]

by Lisa Shroyer

The esteem of his alcohol
 Is not high or mighty
But low like his eyes as he looks over
The lip of the dusted shot glass
 Out to the lakewater, moving
The shore, there, the other side
Where bears might be roving—
 His tent is dark and slanted
On the moonlit bank
And we sit round his weak flame
 Marshmallows melting on the ends of cricket sticks
”shh, what was that?” “nothing” “just wind” “birds, maybe”
these children, drinking
knowing the inebriation comes
he is the wise one, in the folding chair
these lambs, to the lake receding
 in the world of night nature something
sinister sinking
like the sighing moon, falling so lunar and white
 into the trees
I think we lay like dead Indians
 While the medicine man hums
The chant of the ancient
 Misdirected ones—
“sink down great sky
 into this crater of light and life
take my lambs, slaughter ‘em, they are unknowing
of the innocence here I rape
 with this bottle and this glass”



Stephanie Foster

ah, Brandon, you were nineteen with a cooler
of ice
and various bottles—still the wisest one
with a different opiate
for the mass
of our bodies crosshatched
 round the campsite—a black cricket slides
his bow
to some low plaintive tune. The lambs they go
so soon
so soon.

Weeds

by Meg Weireter

He dug his fingers into me and messily
unearthed all the tangled roots, discarded them
in the tight thick knots they made, wild,
heedless. The weeds, packed densely
together, leaves rubbing leaves, flinched
as one, felt the moment of ripping
reverberating throughout their crisp green
bodies as the warm calloused
fingers tugged and tugged at each. With terrible method,
numbed gruff expression and grunts, the unwelcome
gardener went about his work, stripping me
bare and clearing out the clinging plants,
which until then only knew gentle trembling
in silent drafts, the understated
shy heat of the sunlight.

He left only a little dead foliage
in his unruly wake, scattered over me
in patches. I don't like to find them
there—they are dirty and flat with his footsteps.
The plants seem to echo with his rumbling
attacks, with the coarse splitting sound
of uprooting. The leaves rub
rashes into my soft fingers.

But new weeds will always grow again, no
matter how hesitantly—their thin

young roots crawl downward, tentative
and curious, into the bare dusty soil left
behind in my body. Small bright green heads poke
and slither out from the ground,
growing in sparse rows, their hold
weak, and I almost forget
the moist heaviness of draping weeds, warm
oily leaves and thick stems tugging
steadfastly at the soil.

I have to remember that the body
is only the greenhouse, the container
for growing things. The new plants are slow
in coming, still too small to hide
anything in unbridled growth, too timid
to threaten, to choke
with poisonous remembrances.

The Inconveniences of Shopping Cart Paranoia

by Carly Woods

I'd be on you like American on Commie
If I didn't like the backseat so much
60's vinyl molding to the shape of my back
Tainted melodies that I love and hate echoing round my mind
The putrid stench of ancient vomit ever present
But my eyes still zero in on the back of your neck
As the pop rock explosions in my mouth parallel the fireworks
in my hormones
Grasping her hand to conjure up jealousy in your sight
Like Anais Nin and June Miller in New York
Sparkling envy in Henry and the sexual revolution
Of course it's platonic
Watching vehicles whir on by
Burning fossil fuels
Us girls spouting pistachio remembrances to you boys
As you whisper your fishstick visions to only me
We were girls and I thought that only girls could comprehend
code words
Like my eyes gawking as you "got jiggy with it" in the front
seat
The fading windshield of the dreams we had entertained
Were close enough to touch
The sunny day and the sprinklers left us drowning in pools of
evil sweat
Glamorous me jumping inside of you with every vulgar shadow
The turn signal implemented
But exhibiting Carrots to the other half of the foursome
Knowing that one day they would see the descent on you
She gave me a raspberry glare
And stared contently to the left and forward
And we swore we'd never sit in the backseat again
And glance at things we've kissed
Mon coeur est dans mon bisou
The radio decides it can swallow us whole
And then comes back for seconds
But maybe then I would have a chance to be on you
Like American on Commie.

Diffused

by Parthena Kydes

Through his eyes,
Am I a Goddess, golden light emanating from every pore?
Or am I a dark one,
Marred by time, the ultimate uncertainty,
My walls a constant blockade,
My voice a blackened sound?

I stand above him now

Perhaps it is the angle
Or the mood,
But somehow I have risen.

I have expanded, diffused within myself,
But in my heart,
I still feel I am falling.



Cynthia Lotze

The Surfers

By Cynthia Lotze

Sons of fathers never known
spin in the graves of poets.
Brothers of anger and love,
smell of smoke and skin
and fire of fingertips
and eyes that shout
to scream and dance.

To love.

To sail away.

To have one more cigarette.

To have one less bullet.

God strike them all
dead if they move
against the waves that would
see them drown.

Fathers gone speak in tongues
that lap the shore,
drink their blood,
lick their wounds, and pull them
back out to sea, screaming
at the setting of the sun. Poets
living on the crest
of every wave.

No fathers, no dead poets
surf the way we can.

Emily

by Sarah Lucas

I hear a fly buzz as I write. The light
Spills into the corners of my brain. The page
Illuminated by the candle bright
Is like a specter haunting in my cage.

The poem is my prayer. The night in white
Will end when my novena is complete.
At sunrise candles dim, but still I fight,
The fever ever rising in its heat.

Poverty of life—that is my vow
So I can write of death more easily.
The poems sock in beads of sweat, and now
I count them just like beads of rosary.

I promise that my passion will not end,
And wilting in this cloistered cell I'll be.
At dawn the dream is broken. Foe or friend—
They all seem just like paper dolls to me.

So thin they are, and so alike. And through
My curtain's shroud I peek; they don't see me,
And I, quite magnified in morning dew,
Do think the being Somebody would be

A horrid thing, so public, not obscure
As what I in my prison want to be.
Perhaps I am mistaken, I'm not sure.
Perhaps they all are Nobodies, like me.

Elegy for the Innocent

By Sarah Lucas

The innocent never know
That their days are numbered. But I do
Remember when I didn't care
If my shirt was not tucked in. I did
Not have a closet full of forgotten
Clothes that I only wore once. I never
Thought twice about wearing the same
Pair of dirty sneakers every day. I did not
Have all my ridiculous shoes lined up
Like soldiers. The purest Me was not a slave
To the mirror, mirror on the wall.

The sticky sap stained my hands as I climbed
The pine tree. I relished the hours
I spent reading five books at once. The other
Little girls were miniature women
In tight dresses hugging tiny bodies without
Curves. The little boys told dirty jokes
That I did not understand. But for me
There were still no complications
Or connotations. No goddess of popularity,
No temple of sophistication. I was completely
Me, lonely and innocent.



Cynthia Lotze

Funeral

by Elena Rousseau

Do you not know, have you not heard how still
you seem there, eyes closed and hands deliberate,
soft around a silken rose? People are
talking. Louder than a day ago tears
that colored my eyes and the corners of
my mouth, their whispers aren't about dead things—
but the flies kept at the open window
of the room, so thickly floral is
the smell we bought you.

And do you not know,
have you not heard the hush they spread, now
as the tinny strands of grace and wings cease
from the church radio? When the air is
full with quiet, they get full with you and
try, like me, not to move. But you are still
and my skin is damp, and warm, and stretched
across me the way you are, lifelessly
final.

You do not know, you have not heard,
nor seen, not felt any of this from where
you doze in lengthy dream—have you? Mother
of my mother, mother to me, must I
give you a last quick rushing of memory
and hands to the dark edge of your casket?
The sting of thick life is hot beneath my
skin. Is that not enough to remind me that—

you are stopped—like the songs, like the people,
like the preacher, like the flies from the heat
of late September's window—like this room
and the breath that falls dead, back in my chest.
While outside the world does not flinch, spinning
past this small white place that sits with itself
and its small, sad folk in the only hour
time stops to let it.



Cynthia Lotze

Daughter

by Stephanie Foster

She was my daughter;
A child of my invention.
I cherished every part of her w/every part of
me.

The lyrical voice
The tears she shed
Her darkness
&
Morbidity.
Her Beauty.
Her lips parted in a sigh
& the breath rushed out of her.
The desperation that plagued her;
She could not go any further.
Her glory was so short-lived—

She became her mother.

A Vermont Lesson

By Ronald Russis

No resonating echo of cured wood cracking,
but an earsplitting shriek screaming its defiance.
Green wood, too soon split, refusing to cleave in two;
its desperate, last-ditch defense vibrates up his arm.
His sweat-beaded face belies the cool, autumn air;
grimacing, muscles contorting with the effort,
he works much too hard, straining, struggling city boy
that he is (although a man), purposefully flailing.
He should use the weight of the tool, as with a pick,
and he should give better eye to picking his wood—
a Vermonter would have known better. He will too,
one day. Saying, “Good-bye,” I leave him to his lesson.
It’s better learned this way, an appreciation
for our expression of “thrice warmed wood.”



Cynthia Lotze

Memories

by Elena Rousseau

There are ghosts in my hands
that touch what I touch. They explain
themselves, live and die so many times
they ache, and my skin gets thinner.
It breaks and bleeds and breaks and dries
and mourns when I make love.

There are ghosts in my eyes that become
what I see. They believe
in themselves, show and fade all around me—
in and out and the more I remember the faces
I cannot see. They do not acknowledge me—
thinking they are real.

I count them—one, two, on the street-side, see?
Moving but going nowhere. There—two more
at a table having talk. Two in that hallway,
two through a door, two at home in a room with a bed.

One at a window. That is how I see
them—whispering, laughing, making love,
making promises, with smooth strong hands
making lies, that make ghosts, who don't
know when to leave.

